



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



**N**ational parks face many challenges: global climate change, the introduction and spread of invasive plants and animals, development outside park boundaries, and increasing visitor use are just a few. Addressing these diverse challenges requires an understanding of the status and trends of natural resources within our parks and how these fit into a regional context. To achieve this broader understanding, the National Park Service established a national Inventory and Monitoring program that is comprised of 32 networks across the country. The parks in each network share similar issues and geography.

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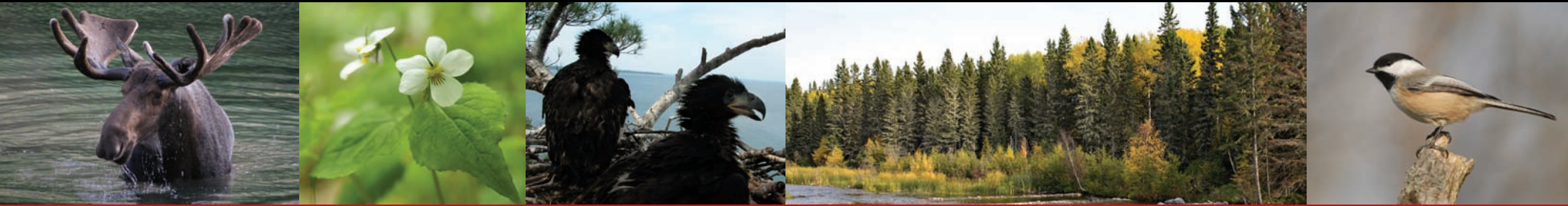


# The Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network

Improving park management through  
greater reliance on scientific knowledge



# The Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network



## About Us

Established in 2000, the Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network has an office in Ashland, Wisconsin, with 10 full-time staff members. We serve nine parks that cover one million acres extending from the boreal forests of northern Minnesota to the sand dunes of southern Lake Michigan. These parks reflect diverse landscapes and human dimensions ranging from remote wilderness to metropolitan areas.



## What We Do

We work with park scientists to collect and organize natural resource data in a consistent manner. We take to the field to gather information for new monitoring efforts such as water quality and persistent contaminants in bald eagles. Other projects, such as songbird surveys, have been done by individual parks for many years. In these instances, we facilitate inter-park comparisons and place data in a regional context. Using this information, we can assess the status and trends of species populations and natural processes. Individual parks can use this information to make management decisions and educate visitors. We provide information the public can access to develop a deeper understanding of the environment and their national landholdings.

## INVENTORY

Our work began by ensuring that each park had a comprehensive list of all the plants and animals within their boundaries. We facilitated peer-review and certification of species lists and conducted additional inventories to fill critical gaps. We also documented the status of species and groups of species of special interest to Great Lakes parks, including:

- aquatic plants
- bats
- freshwater mussels
- grassland birds
- invasive plants and animals

## MONITORING

Now that the inventories are complete, we are working with park managers and scientists from around the region to identify the most important natural resources for long-term monitoring. We look for common interests between parks to build an interconnected and efficient monitoring program. We are establishing monitoring protocols to evaluate regional changes and trends in populations and processes. Current monitoring focuses on:

- amphibians
- contaminants
- land birds
- land cover/land use
- terrestrial vegetation
- weather and climate
- water quality

We collect quality information on a few indicators rather than sparse data on many. We regularly report the results to parks and make the information available to other scientists and the public through conferences, regional and national reports, peer-reviewed publications, and postings to our web site.